

a year without sleep. That would make me very happy. *[Laughter]* But I think it highly unlikely. Therefore, I will keep trying to get some.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:50 a.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Harry and Louise, characters in Health Insurance Association of America-sponsored television advertisements in opposition to the 1993 "Health Security Act"; President Hafiz al-Asad of Syria; and Chairman Yasser Arafat of the Palestinian Authority.

Remarks at a Democratic National Committee Gala

January 19, 2000

Thank you very much. I would like to begin this evening by asking you all to give another round of applause to my friend Phoebe Snow and her band. I thought they were great here tonight, and I thank them for coming. *[Applause]*

I want to thank Ed Rendell for agreeing to become the chair of our party, for the work we have done as friends and partners in the last 7 years. I want to thank Joe Andrew, who has really been an indefatigable sparkplug. You know, most people think I'm in a good humor most of the time, but he makes me look like a sourpuss. *[Laughter]* I mean, the guy is always up. He's like the—and I don't mean this in a demeaning way, but he's sort of like our Energizer bunny. He's just always plugging away there. He's always there, and I thank him for that.

I always tell the people that work around me, in good times and bad, that reality is composed more or less in equal parts of what happens and how you react to it because we can't control everything that happens, but we can always control how we react. This guy is always reacting in the right way, and I thank you, and we're in good shape today and well poised for this millennial election year.

I want to thank all the other officers of the DNC, the former officers who are here, especially the three new co-finance chairs who are here: Carol Pensky, Joel Hyatt, and

Joe Cari, all long-time friends of mine, and I thank you for your willingness to do this.

I will be brief tonight for two reasons: You've heard me give a speech or two before, and secondly, if I'm not careful, I'll blow what little I haven't revealed about my State of the Union Address, and I don't want to do that. Let me try to just say a few things that I hope you will remember and carry with you when you leave tonight and wake up tomorrow.

First of all, I want you to know that I am profoundly grateful for the support and the friendship I have received from so many of you in this room who have been with me and Hillary and Al and Tipper all along the way, in good times and bad. Secondly, I want you to know that I am also very grateful for the success America has enjoyed during my tenure and the fact that we were able to end the 20th century and begin the 21st on such a high note. Most of the credit belongs, as it always does, to the American people, without regard to party, people who just get up every day and dream their own dreams and take care of their own families and obey the law and pay their taxes and make this country hum.

But it really does matter what tools they have to build their dream. It really does matter whether the conditions in which they live and labor and raise their children help or thwart those dreams. And that is why politics matter. That is why ideas matter.

I was so glad that Mayor Rendell said what he did—I don't know how many times I've said that in the last 4 months. I actually find myself watching these debates—and I tried to watch the debates, no offense, that the other party was having, too, but I think ours are more interesting because our guys actually know a lot of things so they have something to say in these things. *[Laughter]* And it really is fascinating to me to listen to them talk. I think that's great.

But underneath all the specifics, the Democratic Party has been transformed and in the process has helped the transforming of America over the last 7 years. When we celebrated over the millennial new year's the great achievements of the 20th century, for the world and for the United States and the triumph of freedom, it is easy to forget that

7 years ago two guys that worked for the Philadelphia Enquirer, in Mayor Rendell's hometown, in 1992 wrote a best-selling book, the title of which was, "America: What Went Wrong?" And it swept the country. I read it through twice, underlined it.

Why was that a best-selling book? Because we had an unusual combination of high unemployment, social decline—that is, exploding welfare and crime rolls and all the other indicators—political gridlock in Washington, and after 12 years of trying, the Republicans had finally succeeded in discrediting the Government of this country. They told us how sorry it was. It took 12 years, and they just about convinced people. So there we were in quite a fix: economic distress, social decline, political gridlock, and a discredited government.

And at least to someone like me, sitting out in the country a long way from Washington, it appeared that the debates that were going on here were like a broken record. Over and over and over again, you know, there was a prescribed Democratic position and a prescribed Republican position. There was the prescribed liberal position and a prescribed conservative position. And everybody was put in these little boxes, and they lobbed their rhetorical artillery across a no-man's land at each other. And not much happened, but it was enough to fill the airwaves at night. And I thought to myself, you know, if I ran my State like that, we'd never get anything done, and we'd just be in a ditch. If people ran their businesses like that, we'd have 20 percent unemployment. If people ran their families like that, the divorce rate would be 100 percent. It was just crazy. It was like we were stuck in this sort of over and over and over again way of doing things.

So I said to the American people, "I have an idea. I'm a Democrat by heritage, instinct, and conviction. But I think we're living in new times; we have to have new approaches. We've got to be willing to try new ideas. We've got to be willing to break out of old patterns, but we ought to be anchored in the fundamental ideas that every American should have opportunity, but every American should be a responsible citizen and that all of us are part of a community, and whenever the least of us is in trouble, the rest of us

are lessened. And no one should be shut out of this community just because they're not like the rest of us, as long as they're willing to show up every day, obey the law, and be good citizens. And beyond that, we ought not to rule out anything; we ought to be willing to try new ideas.

"And the first thing we've got to do is get this country out of debt. But we can't pretend that you can do it by calling for a constitutional amendment to balance the budget and then never do anything about it. You either have got to raise taxes or cut spending or do both." Somebody said, what was the single new reform I brought to Washington? I think it was arithmetic. [Laughter] We brought arithmetic back to Washington.

Anyway, the rest is history. But I want you to understand that this idea—we proved, for example, that the progressive party, or the liberal party, if you will, could run the first back-to-back surpluses in 42 years—not the conservative party, the progressive party—and that we could do it and still double our investment in education and training because we've given you the smallest Government in 37 years; we've eliminated hundreds of programs; we've cut out 16,000 pages of Federal regulations. We got rid of stuff that nobody ever comes up to me and tells me how much they miss. I'll give anybody here \$5 if before I walk out of here tonight, you can come up and say, "I really miss this regulation," and tell me what it was; or, "I really wish you hadn't gotten rid of that program." And I got rid of hundreds of them. So just come tell me one. Tell me how you yearn for its return. [Laughter]

So we said, "Why should we choose between investing in education and science and technology and the environment and health care and getting rid of the deficit? Let's do both. Why should we choose between tougher punishment or better prevention to lower the crime rate? Why don't we do both? Why should we choose between improving the environment and growing the economy, especially with the present state of development of technology and energy? Let's do both."

And the results, I think you'll all agree, have been pretty good. And it's not just about economics. Twenty million people have been

able to take a little time off from work without losing their jobs when there is a sick parent or a baby is born under the family leave law, a bill vetoed in the previous administration, vetoed because it was supposed to be so bad for business. Almost a half million felons, fugitives, and stalkers haven't gotten a handgun because of the Brady bill, a bill vetoed in the previous administration because it was supposed to undermine our freedom to keep and bear arms. Ninety percent of our kids immunized against serious diseases for the first time. And I could go on and on.

Now, the first thing I want you to go out and tell people is—I used to say when I was at home, “When you find a turtle on a fencepost, the chances are it didn't get there by accident.” We have worked hard to modernize our party and to modernize our country. And we don't claim credit for every good thing that went on in this country, but we did establish the conditions and give people the tools to make the most of their own lives. And that's what we believe the role of the National Government is in the 21st century.

And the second thing, elections are always about tomorrow. I said on New Year's Eve that as long as our dreams outweigh our memories, we can be forever young. And that is the destiny of this country. And so what Americans have to think about is, in '92 we had economic distress, social decline, political gridlock, discredited Government; 2000, we've got the strongest economy in history, the social fabric is clearly on the mend; we have developed as a nation a new consensus, even though sometimes you can't tell it here in Washington, for a progressive politics that is fiscally responsible but socially concerned; and the credibility of the Government's ability to do its job has been restored. And for the first time all these things have happened, and we are not paralyzed by an internal crisis or an external threat.

So the big issue about—if the 20th century was about freedom and its triumph, the beginning of the 21st century is about whether we will use this wisely. What are we going to do now? And that's what I want you to focus on all year long. When you get tired of coming to these things and calling somebody else to help our party, when you get

weary or some little bump in the road occurs in these elections, I want you to remember we didn't get here by accident; you brought us here. All those times you wrote checks you'd just as soon not have written, all those nights you went to those dinners when you had rather stayed home and watched a movie, all those times you've showed up at some public event because you wanted to be loyal.

This is about ideas and change, and the people's lives have changed. And we are in a position never before existent in my lifetime to write the future of our dreams for our children. What I always hoped we could do in my tenure as President is turn this country around and get us moving in the right direction, so that our children would literally have a chance to build the future of their dreams.

And so the big question for us now is, what are we going to do with this magic moment? Are we going to indulge ourselves in it, pretend that the elections don't matter, take some sort of short-term benefit that may or may not help us get there? Or are we going to say, “Thank you, God, for giving us this moment. Give us the wisdom to use it well and try to honestly say, now what are the big opportunities and the big problems that are out there staring us in the face, and what in the world are we going to do about it?”

And for the next year I'm going to do my best to finish the unfinished business of the last Congress, from the Patients' Bill of Rights to sensible gun legislation to hate crimes and employment nondiscrimination legislation to trying to extend the life of Medicare and get a sensible prescription drug benefit for our seniors—75 percent of them don't have it today. I'm going to try to chart the long-term direction that I want America to go in. And then I'm going to have as ambitious a program for what we can do in the next year as I have ever offered the American people in the State of the Union, because I think they hired us to show up for work.

People keep telling me, “Well, it's election year, you know.” And I say, “Well, we're all drawing a paycheck, aren't we?” It's election year, and then people who aren't in the election want to use that as an excuse not to go

to work or not to get anything done. I don't understand that. I think we ought to get more done this year because we're not running. I don't understand that.

But hear me well, now. As Democrats we have two obligations that you must shoulder. We must be competitive in this campaign. We must be determined not to be so out-spent we can't be heard, and we must never forget that our job, since we are governing, is to do good things for the American people, including good things with our friends in the Republican Party whenever they're willing to work with us, and if they're not, to the best of our ability on our own. So just remember, you've got a lot to be proud of; you've got a good story to tell.

But the American people now have to decide whether they think this turtle got on the fencepost by accident and where they want to go with this magic moment in the future. And what I really care about is thinking that all this stuff we've labored to do the last 7 years can be used together to sort of liberate the energy, the imagination, the heart, the spirit of America; to be a force for peace and freedom and prosperity around the world; to give all the poor people in this country who are willing to work a chance to live the American dream; to give everybody a world-class education; to bring health insurance to the people who can't afford it now; to deal with these big challenges.

You can make your own list, but just remember the most important thing. If you look at where we are now compared to where we were then, we got there because we had good ideas, rooted in good values, with a real vision. If you look at where we are now, compared to where we can go, and you understand that the sky is the limit, you begin to appreciate the importance of this election.

Joe and Ed talk about how I show up at the drop of a hat, even though I'm not running for anything. There is a reason. I have never forgotten a day I was here, for whom I was working. I have never been under the illusion that I was anything other than the hired hand of the American people. And it's contract time again. And they're going to give a lot of employment contracts this year, from the White House—in Joe's terms, from the White House to dogcatcher. Just once in my

life I hope I meet the Democratic nominee for dogcatcher some day. There have been days where there is not much difference in that and the White House. [Laughter]

Anyway, it's contract time again. And if you believe in what we've done, if you believe in why you drug yourselves out in good weather and bad and when you weren't feeling good and you worked all these dinners and receptions, if you believe in why you wrote all those checks and did all those things, remember, it's contract time again, and the people have to decide again.

And if we blew this decision, we wouldn't be the first people to blow a decision just because things were so good. How many times have you made a mistake in your life because things were going along so well, you thought there were no consequences to what you did or what you decided on any given day? This is a momentous election. The American people have been well served by our party. They need to be well served by our voices and by our continued service. I'll do my part; you'll do yours; we'll have the biggest celebration yet in this millennial year.

Thank you, and God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:27 p.m. in the North Hall at the Corcoran Gallery of Art. In his remarks, he referred to entertainer Phoebe Snow; and Edward G. Rendell, general chair, Joseph J. Andrew, national chair, and Carol Pensky, Joel Hyatt, and Joe Cari, finance co-chairs, Democratic National Committee.

Notice—Continuation of Emergency Regarding Terrorists Who Threaten To Disrupt the Middle East Peace Process

January 19, 2000

On January 23, 1995, by Executive Order 12947, I declared a national emergency to deal with the unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security, foreign policy, and economy of the United States constituted by grave acts of violence committed by foreign terrorists that disrupt the Middle East peace process. By Executive Order 12947 of January 23, 1995, I blocked the assets in the United States, or in the control of United States persons, of foreign terrorists